

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 3, 7, and 9 have been amended.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 3-4, 6-7 and 9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over previously cited U.S. Publication 2002/0018218 (Conheady) in view of previously cited U.S. Patent No. 5,485,406 (Wada) and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,910,411 (Teraguchi). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Applicant hereby respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of the claims in view of the following arguments.

Regarding the rejection of independent claims 1, 7, and 9, these claims have been amended to recite that one of the light beams scans the tire tread surface, and the other two of the light beams scans the tire side walls at the inside and the outside of the wheel such that all surface spots of the tire are scanned. These amendments are fully supported, for example, at paragraph 0016 of the present application.

None of the cited references, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests the claimed three-sensor arrangement to scan the tire tread surface and the tire side walls at the inside and the outside of the wheel such that all surface spots of the tire are scanned, as required by amended claim 7, or the corresponding scanning steps of claims 1 and 9. Conheady teaches scanning a wheel, not a tire. Wada teaches scanning a tire tread only (not the tire side walls), for the purpose of determining the profile of only the tire tread. Teraguchi teaches scanning the side walls of a tire, but does not teach scanning such that all surface spots of the side walls are scanned, as claimed. Rather than scanning all surface spots, Teraguchi explicitly teaches placing its sensors (e.g., two sensors 3 as shown in Fig. 5 of Teraguchi) facing the two side wall surfaces

of the tire at fixed detection positions “at which irregularities are most liable to occur,” based on experience and statistics. See, e.g., Teraguchi at col. 4:16-25 and 50-54. Teraguchi also teaches that its sensors 3 should have a small spot diameter of 1.0 mm or smaller (Teraguchi at col. 4:61-68), and that larger spot diameters that cover a larger area yield inaccurate results (Teraguchi at col. 5:8-17). Teraguchi would therefore not provide a skilled artisan with a reason to scan all surface spots of a tire, as claimed, and in fact teaches away from the recited requirement of scanning all surface spots of the tire.

Furthermore, none of the three cited references teaches or suggests mounting three sensors to movable components of a wheel balancing machine, as required by amended claim 7.

Thus, even if the references were combined as suggested by the Examiner, the resulting combination would not be the scanning arrangement/steps of claims 1, 7, and 9, or the sensor mounting arrangement of claim 7. None of the three references teaches or suggests scanning the tire tread surface and the tire side walls at the inside and the outside of the wheel such that all surface spots of the tire are scanned (as required by claims 1, 7, and 9). As discussed hereinabove, each of Teraguchi and Wada disclose scanning only a specified region of the tire. Teraguchi teaches that only small circular regions on the tire surface should be detected. Moreover, none of the references teaches or suggests mounting three sensors to movable components of a wheel balancing machine (as required by claim 7), for scanning the two side walls and the tire tread to scan all surface spots of the tire. Therefore, any combination of Conheady, Wada, and Teraguchi, however made, would still be missing these features of amended claims 1, 7, and 9, and it would not have been obvious to add these features to any Conheady/Wada/Teraguchi combination.

Consequently, amended independent claims 1, 7 and 9 are patentable, as are claims 3, 4, and 6, which depend from claim 1.

Having fully responded to all matters raised in the Office Action, Applicant submits that all claims are in condition for allowance, an indication for which is respectfully solicited. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicant's attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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